

OFFICE OF THE HEAD OF THE CIVIL SERVICE OF THE FEDERATION

A PAPER ON
CRITICAL ISSUES IN HUMAN RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT IN THE NIGERIAN UNIVERSITY
SYSTEM: RECONFIGURING FOR EXCELLENCE.

PRESENTED BY

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1. INTRODUCTION:

Human Resource Management (HRM) refers to the **governance of people to influence them perform to the best of their abilities** towards achieving better performance for the organization.

People are essential to the success of any organization. It is well known that human capital is the most important amongst other

production resources. **Human Resource Managers, which include the Chief Executive Officers of all organisations, REGISTRARS of Universities/Directors of HRM Departments, etc, therefore, play pivotal roles towards organisational success.**

The Public Service, which includes all Federal and States Government Universities serve as platform for championing **National Development** through human capital development. As such, these institutions need to be effective and efficient in its conduct of businesses in order to deliver on this onerous responsibility. The pool of quality human resources in our country must be well harnessed and properly governed for excellent service delivery in our universities. This is the primary responsibility of the **UNIVERSITY REGISTRARS.**

This paper, opines that Human Resource Management in every organisation should be at its best despite all odds (mounting wave of overarching challenges of our time) in order to achieve excellence in service delivery.

2. DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS:

- Public Service (as an Institution) refers to the machinery of government that are involved in the initiation, development and implementation of government policies, programmes and projects for the progress of the society (National Development).
- Public Service covers the Executive, Legislature, Judiciary, Military, Paramilitary, Parastatals and corporations where government has 51% shares holding.
- The Public Service enjoys continuity of existence. It maintains the highest levels of integrity, impartiality, accountability, and leadership. It is strategic and innovative; anchored in meritocracy and fairness, professionalism, transparency, apolitical (neutrality) and guarantee the fundamental human rights of the citizenry.
- **The Public Service is a Bureaucratic System with defined channels of communication, operating based on rules. It is impersonal and serves the public. The Public Service is people oriented.**

The success of any government in delivering on its people-oriented policies depends on the efficiency and effectiveness of the Public Service, which depends solely on the effectiveness of its workforce; the Public Servants. The importance of the roles of the enormous of registrars of government owned universities comes to bear. **The registrar's role is pivotal in Administration, Human resource Management and Academic.**

3. CRITICAL ISSUES IN HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN THE NIGERIAN UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

This paper is meant to examine the critical issues in Human Resource Management in the Nigerian University System and proffer some solutions for excellent service delivery. **This topic therefore, presupposes that there are critical issues that need to be reconstructed if we are to achieve excellence in our mandate.** The approach would be to highlight and address some of the key activities involved in Human Resource Management. The HRM encompasses a list of activities, some of which include:

- i. **Recruitment and Selection:** This is the process of engaging people into the services of an organisation. It involves receiving job applications from candidates, conducting interviews and/or written examinations in order to determine and select the best skilled and qualified candidates who would be able to deliver on the job functions of the organization. This process, which is an important element in Human Resource activity, is found to be abused oftentimes. The issues around it are that the best qualified candidates are likely not to benefit from the recruitment exercise because of undue influences and abuses, job racketeering, selfish ambitions, nepotism, tribalism; depriving the right people from being recruited. The result is poorly skilled personnel/workforce with the task to deliver the mandate of the organization. Of course, this is not peculiar to the University system. It is a critical challenge of Human Resource Management in the Nigerian Public Service. An attempt was made by the Obasanjo Administration in the past to bridge this gap by flagging up the recruitment of high fliers (graduates of 1st Class and 2nd Class Upper Division) into the

Public Service. There is no doubt that the Service is now benefiting from the skills set of these employees **2017. There is also the talent sourcing and short term engagement programmes under FCSSIP. leads/p under FCSIP.** The recognition of Federal Character principle in the recruitment of personnel is one of the measures deployed to satisfy certain yearnings in the Nigerian society but this should be done with merit in mind. Human Resource Managers must therefore ensure that recruitments are done based on merit, despite the challenges that abound.

- ii. **Performance Management:** Human Resource Management also involves helping to boost employee's performance so that the organisation can attain its goals. This happens through performance evaluation, reviews and feedbacks. The issue here is that the present performance evaluation mechanism are abused and seen not to be efficient and effective, leaving our performance delivery at the mercy of the employees themselves, which allows for truancy and un-seriousness in the delivery of duties. Employees can afford to come to work when they like, delay assigned tasks because of the lack of an appropriate Performance Management System. As a way forward, the Office of the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation has included the Automation of the Performance Management System as one of the key pillars in the Federal Civil Service Strategic Implementation Plan 2021-2025 (FCSSIP-25). This is meant to address the limitations and challenges found in the implementation of the manual Annual Performance Evaluation Report (APER), where employees themselves are found to be judges in their own cases. The New Performance Management System (PMS) is automated and has the capability to log when an employee reports and leaves the office on daily basis; determine what duties were assigned and when they were assigned and report on how long it takes the employee to deliver the assignment(s) and how many of the duties were performed by the employee at a given period. Though an employee would still be scored by his superior, human factors are highly minimal and can be evaluated and checked. It is a better system, which will put staff on their toes

to perform, as rewards and promotions are tied to it. The university system is encouraged to adopt the same method, if not already in existence.

- iii. **Succession Planning:** Another key aspect of managing human resource is succession planning. This is to make ready by building capacities of existing staff on the job to enable them fit into strategic roles or positions when services are needed in those areas, mostly when superiors exit the Service. The staff will not just step into the available positions but would have acquired the relevant skills and experience to be able to handle the duties and responsibilities of the exited positions.
- iv. **Defined of Roles (Schedules of Duties) along defined career paths (Schemes of Service):** Here, Human Resource Managers are expected to have identified areas of needs, growth prospects and terminal points of particular job functions, with requisite entry qualifications of the personnel required to carry out the tasks. In the Public Service, this is where the Schemes of Service comes into play. The Schemes of Service is a compilation of Cadres with the definitions and nomenclatures of their entry requirements, job functions at various levels and terminal points of the career of the employees. The National Council on Establishments (NCE) is to ensure that all cadres and qualifications to be operated in the Public Service are deliberated on their merits and approved before they could be included in the Schemes of Service and put to use. Unfortunately, the Universities through their councils "indiscriminately" create cadres and structures at their whims and caprices, leading to disharmony in cadres and duties with varying entry qualifications and career paths for similar job functions; making HRM functions.
- v. **Learning and Development:** The purpose of learning and development is to help an employee build skills that are needed to perform in his/her current and future duties and responsibilities. Dedicated budgets for learning and development if made and available on a yearly basis but it is always not sufficient. It will not be out of place to say that it is capital intensive to sponsor staff on training courses, coaching, attendance at conferences and other developmental

activities. It is even worse when the Chief Executive Officers breach extant rules and decide to reduce training budget for other matters. The challenge in this area is how the Human Resource Managers could distribute a limited training budget to cater for all employees without short-changing quality. This has always been a tough challenge and choice for Human Resource Managers. In order to address this challenge, Human Resource Managers have to adopt different strategies. In the mainstream Service, where FCSSIP-25 is operational, we make do with the Public Service Management Development Institutions like the ASCON, CMD, and PSIN. In addition, we engage resource persons from among the retired and experienced Public Servants who had distinguished themselves during their service years to the training of our personnel. We have found these methods to be more cost effective and better than depleting the limited budget on foreign trainings, which benefit only few privileged staff.

vi. **Compensation and Benefits:** While compensation has to do with salaries, benefits include pension, healthcare (NHIS), leave, etc. No doubt, creating enticing packages for employees will definitely help to keep them motivated for efficient and effective service delivery. However, it is no news that the Nigerian Public Service has different and many salary packages for different agencies/institutions with some Public Servants who found themselves in some Offices to be highly disadvantaged. This is visible in the success of HRM when their staff are handsomely remunerated as against HRM with staff who grumble all times over their meagre take home pay that cannot sustain them. Staff welfare and compensation is also a key pillar in the FCSSIP-25.

vii. **Discipline, Sanctions and rewards.**

viii. **Disengagement (Exit)**

4. Major Challenges observed in the universities HRM system:

- i. Over bearing size of institutional personnel
- ii. Protection of territorial responsibility.
- iii. High mobility of personnel

- iv. Weak institutions in our institutions leading to succumb to external influences. Sentimental considerations
- v. Lack of team work.
- vi. Non ownership of assigned responsibility but commitment to remain in the game.
- vii. Non-professionalization of human resource activities and even beyond.
- viii. Lack of understanding/misconception of the work environment/principle (public service)
- ix. (Skipping of grade levels against the schemes of service and salary structure;

- x. Non-Alignment of maturity period for promotion;

- xi. Disparity in entry levels with same qualifications;
- xii. Non-alignment of qualifications for a given cadre;
- xiii. Indiscriminate introduction of cadres that are in existence; and
- xiv. Wrong nomenclature
- xv. Non-observance of career limits based on qualifications leading to different career progression of officers with same qualifications in the Public Service.

Nos ix-xv are schemes of service issues

- xvi. Indiscriminate promotion of staff, without regard to procedures and criteria. It is sad to always hear Human Resource Managers say **“this is what we do in the university” or “the Unions will not agree”**, when it is their responsibilities to ensure things are done in line with extant rules/regulations and the approved Schemes of Service. It is important to note that Schemes of Service can be prepared for different agencies/institutions of government taking cognizance of their peculiarities, but must be statutorily ratified by the Office of the Head of the Civil Service of the Federation before it can be put to use. The aim is to ensure harmony in establishment matters across the Public Service. Until all agencies of government relate and recognise the statutory rights of one another and recourse to an appropriate agency for the handling of their

mandates, we will continue to function in isolations and government business will take the blow.

5. RECONFIGURING HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT FOR EXCELLENCE

The fundamental role of the Public Service is to serve the nation and the communities in a manner that would facilitate sustainable development. The Public Service is therefore indispensable irrespective of the government in power. All staff on the payroll of the Federal Government are referred to as Public Servants.

As **Registrars, you are the professionals** with the knowledge, expertise, skills and competences required for the human resource management job. You should be knowledgeable in the rules, regulations and procedures guiding all facets of staff administration such as recruitment, promotion, discipline, leave and pension administration. These **rules, regulations and procedures must be strictly adhered to** by all stakeholders in order to entrench uniform standards.

In concluding, I encourage you to exhibit expertise, professionalism, commitment and **courage in administering** these rules and regulations. Failure to do so, will encourage demoralisation, discontentment, petitions writing, labour unrest, and confusion in the management of staff careers. A way out of these, is the creation of a Schemes of Service that will serve the Federal Universities and ensure uniformity. So, let me urge you to cooperate with the Office of the Head of the Civil Service in creating a Schemes of Service for our great learning Institutions.

Thank you and God bless.